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ABSTRACT

A study examined the role of grammar instruction in second language (L2) learning by investigating: (1) whether L2 learners significantly improved their language skills after formal grammar instruction, (2) to what extent grammatical knowledge predicted a learner's next level of overall language proficiency, (3) to what extent grammatical knowledge is related to the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing), and (4) to what degree learners at different levels of overall language proficiency differ in the way they benefit from grammar instruction. Subjects were 242 young adult students enrolled in a university English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) program. Results suggest that the students improved significantly after formal instruction, and that grammatical knowledge is a significant predictor of the students' readiness for the next course level. In addition, grammatical knowledge seems to be a significant component in mastering the four language skills, and students at the beginning level of overall language proficiency gain more on the overall test score than do students at the intermediate or advanced level. However, the grammar competence level and interaction between the overall language proficiency level and grammar competence level could not explain the gain in overall test score. (Author/MSE)

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THE ROLE OF GRAMMAR INSTRUCTION IN AN ESL PROGRAM

A Thesis

Presented to

the Faculty of the Charter School of Education

California State University, Los Angeles

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

Yoonkyung Kecia Yim

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ABSTRACT

The Role of Grammar Instruction in an ESL Program

by

Yoon-kyung Kecia Yim

The role of grammar instruction in second language acquisition is a controversial issue. The objective of this study is to contribute to this discussion by examining: (a) if learners significantly improve their language skills after formal instruction; (b) to what extent, if any, grammatical knowledge predicts a learner's next level of overall language proficiency; (c) to what extent, if any, grammatical knowledge is related to four language skills (listening, reading, writing, and speaking); and (d) to what degree, if any, learners at different levels of overall language proficiency differ in the way they benefit from grammar instruction. The subjects were 242 young adult students enrolled in the American Culture and Language Program (ACLP) at California State University, Los Angeles. Analyses of the data included paired sample t-tests, simple regression analyses, a correlation matrix, a one-way analysis of variance, and a stepwise multiple regression to answer the research questions. The results suggest that the students improved significantly after formal instruction, and that grammatical knowledge is a significant predictor of the students' readiness for the next course level. In addition, grammatical knowledge seems to be a significant component in mastering the four language skills. The results also suggest

that the students at the beginning level of overall language proficiency gain more on the overall test score than the students at the intermediate or advanced level. However, the grammar competence level and interaction between the overall language proficiency level and the grammar competence level could not explain the gain of the overall test score.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

Chapter One is composed of six parts: statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research questions, definition of terms, assumptions, limitations, and finally, significance of the study.

Statement of the Problem

Educators and curriculum developers of English as a Second Language (ESL), or English as a Foreign Language (EFL) programs, are often in a dilemma when answering questions regarding the integration of grammar instruction into the ESL/EFL curriculum. The same is true of students in ESL/EFL programs who have no clear guidelines regarding how much time they should spend on studying grammar to achieve their goal of reaching high levels of communicative language ability.

I have observed from my teaching experience that many students tend to prefer a grammar book, or a grammar class, when they begin learning a foreign language. Immigrants' or international students' attitudes reflected in Valentine & Repath-Martos's (1992) study also indicate second language learners' needs and preferences for grammar instruction in a second language classroom. However, Krashen and Terrell (1983) seemed to gain support from many language teachers who argue with the theory of comprehensible input and the Natural Approach. One of the main principles regarding the Natural Approach is that learners will achieve communicative

goals and grammatical accuracy by increasing the amount of input (comprehensible input) and topic-oriented activities, not by explicit grammar instruction nor by error correction.

Experimental research studies (e.g., Dekeyser, 1998; Ellis, 1995; Krashen, 1981; Long, 1988; Sherwin, 1969), correlation studies (e.g., Alderson, 1993; Boraas; cited in Sherwin, 1969), and theoretical papers (e.g., Celce-Murcia,1991; 1997; Ellis, 1985; Stern, 1992; Terrell, 1991) have addressed the role of grammar instruction from either the supporters' or detractors' position.

In spite of much ongoing research questioning the role of grammar instruction, it seems that there is a large discrepancy between theory and practice at the program level. For example, the American Culture and Language Program (ACLP) at California State University, Los Angeles is an ESL program which offers intensive courses in English skills. The courses offered include listening and pronunciation, grammar, reading, writing, speaking, and TOEFL preparation for non-native speakers of English. This study questioned whether formal grammar instruction, as provided in an ESL program, is necessary to help students attain second language proficiency. This study also questioned the significance of grammatical knowledge as a component of the four language skills (listening, reading, writing, and speaking). Furthermore, this study asked whether learners' language proficiency level can be considered as a significant variable in differentiating the amount of grammar instruction as many

theorists and researchers (e.g., Celce-Murcia, 1991; Ebsworth & Schweers, 1997; Long, 1988; Richard-Amato, 1996) have suggested.

Purpose of the Study

The general purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between grammatical knowledge (as manifested in performance of the discrete grammar test) and overall language proficiency, and between grammatical knowledge and other language skill areas such as listening, reading, writing, and speaking. In addition, this study investigates the effectiveness of grammar instruction at different levels of learners' language proficiency.

The following hypotheses were made in this study: (a) formal instruction is an efficient way of improving second language learners' language proficiency; (b) grammatical knowledge is a significant predictor in determining the students' next level of language learning; (c) grammatical knowledge is most closely related to writing proficiency; (d) learners at a certain level of overall language proficiency differ in the way they benefit from grammar instruction.

Findings of this study can provide curriculum designers, test developers, and educators of ESL/EFL with both insight into reevaluation of the role of grammar and stimuli for further research on grammar instruction in second language acquisition.

Research Questions

This study attempts to answer the following questions:

1. Do students significantly improve their language skills after each formal instruction period?

This question will be examined by conducting paired sample t-tests.

2. To what extent, if any, can grammatical knowledge predict a learner's next level of overall language proficiency?

This question will be examined by performing a pair of simple regression analyses by using the scores of two grammar tests of the English Placement Test (EPT) as the predictor variables. The English Placement Test is a test of listening, grammar, and reading proficiency. The teachers' rating of overall language proficiency will be regressed on the score of the grammar test in each analysis. This rating is the averaged score of the five language skill teachers'(including a grammar teacher's) global judgment on a student's readiness for the next level of instruction.

3. To what extent, if any, is grammatical knowledge related to the four language skills (listening, reading, writing, and speaking)?

This question will be examined by obtaining a correlation matrix among the variables.

4. To what degree, if any, do learners at different levels of overall language proficiency differ in the way they benefit from grammar instruction?

This will be investigated by a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) and followed by a stepwise multiple regression analysis. The interaction between the overall language proficiency level and the grammar competence level will be examined.

Definition of Terms

Some of the terms described here have been adopted or re-defined for the purpose of this study. Those terms are defined as follows:

1. Acquisition

Acquisition is generally defined as "the internalization of rules and formulas which are then used to communicate in the L2" (Ellis, 1985, p. 292).

2. Consciousness-raising

Consciousness-raising means "a deliberate attempt on the part of the teacher to make the learners aware of specific features of the L2" (Ellis, 1993, p. 108).

3. EFL

English as a Foreign Language. EFL is taught in the area where English is not the dominant language (Richard-Amato, 1996). The learners' goals can be instrumental (e.g., getting a job) or integrative (e.g., surviving in another culture).

4. The English Placement Test (EPT)

The EPT was designed by the English Language Institute of the University of Michigan to place students into homogeneous ability levels in its intensive English program (English Language Institute, 1972/1978/1993).

5. ESL

English as a Second Language. English is taught to learners whose native language is not English but who are living in an English-speaking country or area. The goals of ESL learners are usually "to survive physically, socially, and often academically in the new culture" (Richard-Amato, 1996).

6. Explicit Grammar Instruction (EGI)

Explicit Grammar Instruction is defined as "the use of instructional strategies to draw the students' attention to or focus on form and/or structure" (Terrell, 1991, p. 53).

7. Focus on Form

Focus on Form is an approach to second language acquisition which draws students' attention to linguistic features, with the primary focus on meaning or communication. The purpose of this approach is to assist students' comprehension or production (Doughty & Varela, 1998; Long & Robinson, 1998).

8. Formal instruction

The goal of formal instruction is to raise the learner's consciousness about the nature of the target language rules in order to aid learning in a classroom (Ellis, 1985). It is also used in opposition to the non-instructional setting in this study.

9. Grammar competence

Grammar competence in this study is understood as knowledge about syntactical rules and structures usually demonstrated in the performance test of grammar. It includes "the ability to recognize the lexical, morphological, syntactic, and phonological features of a language" (Savignon, 1983, p. 37; see also Bachman, 1990; Widdowson, 1978). The term is used synonymously with grammatical knowledge in this study.

10. Monitor

Monitor is defined as the way learners use formal knowledge (grammatical rules) of a second language to improve accuracy in utterances (Krashen, 1981).

11. Proficiency

Taylor (1988) defines proficiency as "the ability to make use of competence" (p. 166).

12. Usage & Use

The distinction between "usage" and "use" is best described by Widdowson (1978). Both "usage" and "use" are different aspects of linguistic performance. While

usage indicates "the extent to which the language user demonstrates his knowledge of linguistic rules", use means "the extent to which the language user demonstrates his ability to use his knowledge of linguistic rules for effective communication" (p. 3).

Assumptions

The following assumptions were made for this study: The four language skills, tested in this study, represent learners' language proficiency.

Even though there are different variables affecting the outcome of test scores such as students' different educational backgrounds or instructors' variability of effectiveness, the students enrolled in ACLP are assumed to receive the same quantity and quality of instruction and take language proficiency tests every three months. During those three months, students in ACLP take classes in listening and pronunciation, grammar (structure), reading, writing, and speaking on a daily basis.

Limitations

Even though many researchers would like to obtain ample evidence of the relationship between grammar instruction and learners' improvement in communicative ability, it is almost impossible to observe the process of language instruction because a variety of variables can influence the outcome of overall language proficiency. This may be the same problem experimental studies have, considering the fact that they can not manipulate all the learner variables. Ellis (1985) also points out the problem of "determining whether the effects observed were the

result of the instruction itself, or simply of more contact opportunity" (p. 227). In this regard, those variables such as different teaching methods, student motivation, personal exposure to another language learning environment, communicative strategies, individual interests or study habits were not controlled in the present study. However, as mentioned in the Assumptions section in this chapter, the background of subjects in this study is regarded as almost homogeneous, and the hours of formal instruction in ACLP is assumed to be the same.

Another limitation of the present study is related to the total grade that the ACLP program creates to reflect overall language proficiency. This grade does not weigh each of the components of language proficiency in listening, grammar, reading, writing, and speaking equally.

Additionally, considering the differences in linguistic features between Indo-European and non Indo-European languages, this study can not preclude the possibilities of obtaining different results if subjects from Indo-European speaking countries were used. Ninety-five percent of the subjects who were involved in this investigation were Asian whose native languages included Cantonese, Mandarin, Korean, Japanese, and Thai.

Significance

This study is significant in that it goes beyond prior studies, by providing empirical evidence examining the role of grammar instruction in relation to different

variables, such as learners' readiness for the next course level, four language skills, and learners' language proficiency level.

This research can help ESL/EFL instructors to reconsider the role of grammar instruction in coordination with the other language skills. Moreover, this study can provide researchers and practitioners in the field of ESL/EFL with a theoretical guide for understanding the role of grammar instruction at all levels of language acquisition.

CHAPTER 2

Review of Related Literature

Chapter Two begins with the theories and history on which grammar instruction is based. A review of different views on formal instruction is followed by two opposing views on grammar instruction. With regard to the dispute about grammar instruction, only two positions, that of the pro-grammarians' and that of the anti-grammarians' positions were discussed. Even though there are various groups which fall in between or fall outside these two positions, the groups which support at least some form-focused instruction have been included in the boundary of the pro-grammarians' position. Finally, several researchers' discussions regarding learners' proficiency levels are presented.

Theories of Teaching ESL

To understand the role of grammar instruction, it will be helpful to review why we learn or teach another language. Rivers (1981) presents seven classes of objectives in teaching another language:

- to develop the students' intellectual powers through the study of another language;
- to increase the students' personal culture through the study of great literature and philosophy to which the new language is the key;

- to increase the students' understanding of how language functions and to bring them, through the study of another language, to a greater awareness of the functioning of their own language;
- to teach students to read another language with comprehension so that they may keep abreast of modern writing, research, and information;
- to give students the experience of expressing themselves within another framework, linguistically, kinesically, and culturally;
- to bring students to a greater understanding of people across national barriers, by giving them a sympathetic insight into the ways of life and ways of thinking of the people who speak the language they are learning;
- to provide students with the skills that will enable them to communicate orally, and to some degree in writing, in personal or career contexts, with the speakers of another language and with people of other nationalities who have also learned this language. (p. 8)

To achieve the above linguistic and cultural goals in teaching another language, the methods of second language instruction have been more or less pivoted on the focus of grammar. As Yip (1994) points out, grammar instruction has been on the pendulum of language teaching methodologies swinging back and forth from one extreme of grammar-driven methods to the other extreme of the communicative approaches.

The grammar-translation method focused on the teaching of grammar rules, and it required "detailed grammatical explanations in the native language" (Rivers, 1981, p. 29) to have students translate the target language into the native language without error. Rivers (1981) maintains that the grammar-translation method was not successful with the less intellectual students, who made many mistakes repeatedly, and states, "these less gifted students find language study very tedious and usually drop out of the class as soon as they possibly can" (p. 30). The grammar-translation method was replaced by the direct method, in which grammar was being taught more systematically in the target language and "direct comprehension" in the target language was required to infer the meaning of the text (Rivers, 1981, p. 33). However, it was also noted that the direct method might lead students to develop "inaccurate fluency" and establish habits that will be hard to fix later (Rivers, 1981).

The methods of second language teaching went through another turning point in the mid-fifties, when the audiolingual method was developed to replace the grammar-translation and the direct method. The audiolingual method was influenced by structural linguistics and behaviorism: structural linguistics attends to the sound system and sentence patterns while behaviorism bases the learning process on stimuli, responses, and reinforcement. Drills, memorization, and pattern practice are features of the audiolingual method (Richards & Rodgers, 1986). The effectiveness of the audiolingual method was evidenced by Scherer and Wertheimer's Colorado Project

(1962; cited in Lynch, 1996) in which the audiolingual group outperformed the traditional grammar-translation group in overall proficiency as well as in speaking and listening. However, the following research, named the "Pennsylvania Project" (Smith, 1970; cited in Lynch, 1996), which compared the efficacy of the audiolingual method with the traditional method and a "middle-of-the road" method (combination of audiolingualism and grammar-translation) yielded no difference among these three methods. Criticism of the audiolingual method was voiced by cognitive psychologists, who emphasized the role of consciousness in grammatical features. Audiolingualism was also criticized for the abuse of mechanical drills, which can make classroom activities meaningless and boring (DeKeyser, 1998; Rivers, 1981).

This skepticism about audiolingualism gave birth to the cognitive approach, which "stressed that students should understand the rules for using target language forms and structures before they attempt to use them for communication" (Terrell, 1991, p. 53).

Communicative language teaching is the opposite of the cognitive approach and emphasizes teaching English in real life settings. One of the big differences between audiolingualism and the communicative approach is that the primary goal of audiolingualism is to master linguistic accuracy, while communicative language teaching stresses "the importance of fluency over accuracy, or learning through communication" (DeKeyser, 1998, p. 51; see also Richards & Rodgers, 1986).

However, concerns about learners' grammatical inaccuracy was raised again by a group of researchers such as Celce-Murcia, Long, and Williams, and it seems to be the most recent trend that learners' attention should be focused on form within content-based curricula (Williams, 1995). Liao (1996) summarizes these changes in the pattern of language teaching methodology as follows:

> The research for teaching methodology was focused on the relationship between language knowledge and practice and went through a U-shaped course - first stressed, then unstressed and finally restressed the language knowledge. (p. 6)

Views on Formal Instruction

With regard to the efficacy of formal instruction, many researchers and theorists (e.g., Krashen, 1981; Krashen, Jones, Zelinski, & Usprich,1978; Krashen & Seliger, 1976; Long, 1988) seem to agree that formal instruction is more beneficial than an informal environment in second language acquisition, although some researchers such as Upshur (1968; cited in Krashen, 1976) and Schulz (1991; cited in Ebsworth & Schweers, 1997) argue against formal instruction in that it has "relatively little influence on spontaneous language use" (Schulz, 1991; cited in Ebsworth & Schweers, 1997, p. 240). However, Schulz, more or less, equates formal instruction with explicit grammar instruction while Krashen and Seliger (1976) relate formal instruction to a classroom setting which is an "artificial language environment" (p. 20).

A study by Krashen, Jones, Zelinski, and Usprich (1978),involves one hundred and sixteen ESL students at Queens College. They compared the effects of formal English instruction with the effects of exposure in English speaking countries by measuring learners' performance in language learning. The students were administered a questionnaire and the following tests: a) the Michigan Test of English Proficiency, b) a composition, and c) a cloze test. The results of the study showed that there was a more significant correlation for English proficiency with years of formal English study than with years of residence in an English-speaking country. Based on the results, Krashen et al., suggest that "formal instruction is a more efficient way of learning English for adults than trying to learn it 'in the street'" (p. 260). Krashen's later study (1981) is consistent with this position. Krashen investigated the relationship between language proficiency and linguistic environment. The sixty-six subjects were all adult learners of English, as measured by the SLOPE performance test. He concluded that formal classroom instruction benefits learners by providing feedback for the building of the monitoring and of a grammatical reference paradigm.

Long's (1983; 1988) studies also support the positive view on formal instruction. Acknowledging the 12 past studies, which have provided ample evidence of the positive effect of second language instruction, he points out the effectiveness of formal instruction in terms of the second language acquisition process, rate, and ultimate level of attainment.

Two Positions on Grammar Instruction

Grammar instruction, especially explicit grammar instruction (EGI), understood as drawing learners' attention to linguistic form and structure in instruction, is represented by two major conflicting arguments. One is the "non-interventionist position" and the other is the "interventionist approach."

A non-interventionist position supports the idea that "learners do not need EGI if they receive enough comprehensible input in a low anxiety environment" (Terrell, 1991, p. 58). On the other hand, the interventionist approach supports the notion that "given the low number of input/interaction hours in a typical foreign language college (70-150 hours) or high school (100-300 hours) instruction, EGI can serve to speed up parts of the acquisition process" (Terrell, 1991, p. 58). The view supporting the non-interventionist position seems to be more related to the Natural Approach, or simply categorized, the anti-grammarians' position, while the interventionists' view is in the spectrum of the grammatical syllabus supported by the pro-grammarians.

The Anti-grammarians' Position

According to Stern (1992), the anti-grammarians have argued that grammar instruction has no ultimate effect on the second-language acquirer's competence. The anti-grammarians' position is represented by Krashen's (1981) comprehensible input theory, which supports the notion that as long as learners are provided with comprehensible input in a condition of low affective filter the learners will acquire the

second language. Terrell (1982; cited in Scarcella, 1996) acknowledged Krashen's position by saying that with comprehensible input the acquirer will improve in both fluency and accuracy.

There are many studies (e.g., Boraas, 1917; cited in Sherwin, 1969; Briggs, 1913; cited in Terrell, 1991; and Brown,1973; cited in Krashen, 1981), which support this anti-grammarians' position. For example, an experimental study was carried out early in 1913 by Briggs, who investigated the relationship between grammar instruction and language skills. He worked with two matched seventh grade classes, in one class students received formal grammar instruction for an hour and a half each week for three months, while in the other class students studied composition and language. Then Briggs switched groups to teach the second group grammar for another three months, and a test followed. An initial test was given to all students in the beginning, and after three months of grammar instruction, the grammar group was given a second set of tests. The initial test was administered again to all students at the end. Briggs's results showed that there was "no 'improvement that may be attributed to . . . training in formal grammar' " (cited in Sherwin, 1969, p. 118). However, it was pointed out that Briggs tested students' grammatical correctness in the writing test and overlooked writing ability (Sherwin, 1969).

Boraas's correlational study (1917; cited in Sherwin, 1969), from the data of students' grades in two city high schools in Minnesota, seems to provide further

evidence against grammar instruction in second language teaching. The correlation between 'attainment in formal English grammar' and 'ability to write a composition, write a letter, capitalize and punctuate a paragraph and correct the language errors in sentences and paragraphs was 0.25 which, according to Boraas, is 'practically the same as the correlation between grammar and arithmetic, geography, or history' (cited in Sherwin, 1969, p. 119).

Terrell (1991), in his review of the role of grammar instruction, presents the evidence that "the ability to demonstrate grammatical knowledge on a discrete-point grammar exam does not guarantee the ability to use that knowledge in ordinary conversation, be it spontaneous or monitored" (p. 54). His discussion was based on the joint study by Baycroft, Perrone, and Terrell (1987). According to them, in spite of concentrated instruction on the forms and uses of the Spanish subjunctive, first-year university students were unable to use the mood correctly in free conversation.

In this respect, Widdowson (1978) maintains that learners are not able to deal with actual instances given their knowledge of the usage (master of linguistic rules) and concludes that the teaching of usage does not appear to guarantee a knowledge of use (effective communication). The same position was supported by Krashen in his 1981 study. Even though Krashen acknowledges the positive role of formal instruction, he concludes that the practice of "routines and patterns" does not significantly lead to "successful language acquisition" (p. 99).

The Pro-grammarians' Position

Unlike anti-grammarians, pro-grammarians believe that explicit grammar instruction promotes grammatical accuracy and accelerates second language learning and acquisition (Ebsworth & Schweer, 1997). Ellis (1993) strongly supports this position by arguing that consciousness-raising and explicit knowledge facilitates learners' intake to form implicit knowledge.

Commenting on the role of grammar instruction, Terrell (1991) suggests three ways in which explicit grammar instruction can affect the language acquisition process: (a) "as an 'advance organizer' to aid in comprehending and segmenting the input; (b) as a meaning-form focuser that aids the learner in establishing a meaning-form relationship for morphologically complex forms; and (c) as means for monitoring, which in turn, will be available for acquisition in the output" (p. 58). Terrell's position is somewhat different from Krashen's in that for Krashen (1981), the routines and patterns are useful only as the monitors, which may facilitate intake, but are not sufficient for successful language acquisition.

Doughty's 1991 study (cited in Ellis, 1995) provides empirical evidence of the positive effect of grammar instruction. Doughty compared three groups where grammar instruction was controlled differently: (a) one with meaning-based instruction aided by explicit grammar explanation, (b) one with only grammar explanation on structure, and (c) one with no grammar instruction. Her findings show

that the two groups which were engaged in grammar instruction explicitly or implicitly outperformed the group which was merely exposed to the reading of sentences on the overall comprehension test. Additionally, she found that the first group (meaning plus explicit grammar group) outperformed both the second and third group on the reading comprehension test. The superiority of meaning-based-instruction with explicit grammar explanation was also evidenced by Ellis (1993) and DeKeyser (1995; cited in Dekeyser, 1998).

One of the most interesting arguments on the role of grammar instruction can be found in Scarcella's (1996) article. She points out that students in an ESL program tend to develop nonstandard English by engaging in group projects or group discussions with their non-native English speaking peers at a school setting, or by interacting with their ethnic communities. Scarcella goes on to emphasize the role of form-focused instruction and corrective feedback in order to provide the students with a structured setting of standard English instruction.

The role of explicit grammar instruction was also questioned from the viewpoint of teachers and learners. According to a survey study by Ebsworth and Schweers (1997), the majority of the language teaching experts (47 out of 60 subjects) advocated grammar instruction to a certain degree. The general principle behind this position is reflected in an excerpt from an interview with a teacher:

> It would seem that many practitioners have come to believe that individuals whose goal is to develop excellent English for use in academic or business environments can achieve greater accuracy and control through some measure of grammar instruction. (Ebsworth & Schweers, 1997, p. 252)

In terms of learners' needs and attitudes toward grammar instruction, Valentine & Repath-Martos's (1992) findings show that 62% of ESL students enrolled in an advanced level of an ESL course responded on a questionnaire survey that "grammar was very important" (p. 31). However, this result may not be validated as an overall perception of ESL/EFL students at all levels considering that the subjects of their study were students enrolled in an advanced level of the university's ESL course.

The Relationship Between Grammatical Knowledge and Other Language Skills

There are several research studies (e.g., Hunter, 1996; Paribakht & Wesche, 1992; Schneider, 1993) that indicate that learners who received explicit grammar instruction performed well on both discrete-point grammar tests and the tasks which draw learners' attention to grammatical features. Both Bateman and Zidonis (1964; cited in Hunter, 1996) and Schneider (1993) reported the effectiveness of grammar instruction as reflected in successful performance on the writing test. Especially, Bateman and Zidonis' findings show that an experimental group, which was taught formal grammar, outperformed a control group (no-grammar-instruction-group) not only in the quality and complexity of the writing but also in the decrease in errors.

This can be interpreted in two ways: (a) grammar instruction does make a difference, and (b) grammatical knowledge can be transferred to grammatical accuracy in a productive skill, especially in writing.

Paribakht and Wesche (1992) provide evidence that comprehension-based instruction or grammar instruction alone is not sufficient for second language acquisition. The subjects involved in the study were 37 young adult university students divided into two groups. One group received Comprehension-based instruction on reading and listening skills with authentic text. The second group received integrated four-skill instruction with emphasis on grammar learning. The results of the study showed superior gains in receptive proficiency and smaller gains in grammatical measurement by the Comprehension-based class. Paribakht and Wesche suggest that "explicit grammar instruction is not needed for the improvement of text comprehension skills" (p. 14), but is needed for accuracy in speaking and writing.

Alderson (1993), on the other hand, provides evidence that shows a high correlation between grammar and reading tests. Even though Alderson's primary question is the investigation of the need for a grammar test in a battery of English tests, he indicates that grammatical knowledge is "an important component in reading in a foreign language" (p. 218).

Language Proficiency Level

Learners' proficiency level has been discussed as one of the important variables which determine whether or how much explicit grammar should be given. Some researchers (e.g., Celce-Murcia,1991; Dekeyser, 1998; Master, 1994) argue that grammar instruction benefits intermediate or advanced learners rather than beginning level learners, but no research provides empirical evidence.

According to Celce-Murcia (1991), learners at the intermediate or advanced level need more form-focused teaching to develop accuracy while learners at the beginning level are not ready for meaningful analysis of the form. In addition, she illustrates the various learner factors which determine the importance of grammar instruction with the following guideline.

As is shown in Figure 1, Celce-Mercia states that the more factors the teacher identifies on the left side of the grid, the less important it is to focus on form; the more factors the teacher identifies on the right, the more important the grammatical focus becomes. Another interesting aspect observed in this figure is concerning the relationship between grammar instruction and other language skills, which was discussed in the previous section in this chapter. As described by Stern (1992), "the receptive skills require less grammatical knowledge than the productive ones and, between the two productive skills, writing is more grammatically demanding than speaking" (p. 134). This grid shows that listening and reading are placed in the "less

important" side, speaking, in the middle between "less important" and "more important", and writing is placed on the "more important" side. This is in line with Paribakht and Wesches' findings (1992) for bearing no relationship between reading and listening proficiency and grammatical knowledge.

Figure 1

Variables that Determine the Importance of Grammar (Celce-Murcia, 1991)

	Less Important ←	Focus on Form	→ More Important
Learner variables			
Age	Children	Adolescents	Adults
Proficiency level	Beginning	Intermediate	Advanced
Educational background	Preliterate no formal education	Semiliterate, some formal education	Literate well-educated
Instructional variables			
Skill	Listening, reading	Speaking	Writing
Register	Informal	Consultative	Formal
Need/use	Survival communications	Vocational	Professional

On the other hand, Weslander and Stephany (1983, as cited in Long, 1988) attempted to address the issue of proficiency level in terms of formal instruction. They provide information on the performance of the ESL students in Grade 2 through 10, measured by the Bilingual Syntax Measure (a test of oral English proficiency), grades in classes, and a teacher rating. Based on the results which show stronger effect of ESL instruction at lower levels in the first year of schooling, and a diminishing effect in

the second and third years, Weslander and Stephany propose that it is best to provide formal instruction to ESL students when they are at the early stages of learning.

The results of the survey study by Ebsworth and Schweers (1997) reflect this contradictory opinion among language teaching experts. Seven teachers agreed that grammar should be taught at the beginning level of proficiency, five teachers at the intermediate or the advanced level, and five teachers supported instruction at every level. The rationale behind the argument for early-grammar-teaching is based on the belief that learners will have a "good foundation to build on" by the practice of correct usage (p. 250).

Likewise, with regard to proficiency level, theorists and practitioners do not seem to have reached a consensus on the efficacy of grammar instruction. In addition, there have been no research studies which address the relationship between language proficiency level, grammar competence level, and ESL instruction (including grammar instruction).

Summary

This chapter presented the history of theories in teaching foreign languages as related to grammar instruction. Conflicting arguments on formal instruction and explicit grammar instruction were presented.

To summarize the existing studies, the anti-grammarians' position argues that formal grammar teaching does not contribute to improved language proficiency. Pro-

grammarians, on the other hand, are in favor of grammar instruction, which they believe can help the second language acquisition process and affect the ultimate level of attainment. The pro-grammarians' position seem to be gaining support among recent researchers and theorists. It is, at the very least, a recent trend among researchers and theorists in the area of second language teaching to stress grammatical features. Furthermore, the relationship between grammatical knowledge and other language skills was discussed. However, it is still an open question whether the overall language proficiency level is a significant factor in determining the need for grammar instruction. There have been no empirical studies to provide a clear answer. The present study aims to address the ongoing issues by filling the gap in the existing studies and providing empirical research on the role of grammar instruction.

CHAPTER 3

Methods and Procedures

Chapter Three is divided into four sections. First, the subjects and program description section provides demographic information. Next, a description of instruments is followed by scoring procedures and conditions and methods of data analysis, respectively.

Subjects and Program Description

The subjects for this study were 242 non-native speakers of English who were registered in ACLP at California State University, Los Angeles in the fall, 1996, and winter, 1997. As is described in Chapter One, ACLP is an intensive English language program which offers courses in listening and pronunciation, grammar, reading, writing, speaking, and TOEFL preparation to non-native students of English. Ninety-four percent of ACLP students were from Asia, mostly from Taiwan (30.2%), Korea (27.3%), Japan (13%), Thailand (8.7%), and China (8%). Two percent of the ACLP students were from Southern or Central American countries such as Mexico and Columbia, and 1.6% were from Europe, mainly from Russia and Turkey. The remaining one percent consisted of students from Saudi Arabia.

The ACLP consists of six levels of proficiency, and students are placed in levels according to their achievements on the placement tests of English (the EPT, the Writing Test, and either the Oral Interview Test or teachers' rating). The

methodology of the grammar courses at ACLP ranges from traditional grammar-book-centered instruction to extreme communicative approach based instruction.

Instruments

The test results collected from ACLP students came from the following instruments: (a) the English Placement Test (EPT) which was developed by the Testing and Certification Division of the English Language Institute at the University of Michigan (Corrigan, Dobson, Kellman, Spaan, & Tyma, 1978); (b) the Writing Test that was designed by the ACLP faculty; (c) the Oral Interview Test which was also developed by the ACLP faculty; and (d) teachers' rating of overall language proficiency.

1. The English Placement Test (EPT) measures grammar, listening, and reading comprehension (see the sample tests of the EPT in Appendix A). The EPT is designed to measure the individual ESL or EFL student's proficiency in the English language and is utilized to level the students into the appropriate courses in the language program. The test length and test instructions are appropriate for all levels of students who take the placement test. Students enrolled in ACLP take both the EPT and the Writing Test at the end of each quarter to be placed in the next level of class. A different form of the EPT, claimed to be of equal difficulty, is used each quarter to measure the students' English proficiency. The total number of items on the

EPT is 100 multiple choice : 20 listening, 30 grammar, and 50 in the reading section (30 vocabulary and 20 reading comprehension problems).

In the listening section, students are asked to listen to the speaker on the tape who either asks questions or makes a statement. After listening to the tape, students should choose the one answer that corresponds to the question or the statement. In each problem the test taker is given three answer choices. In the grammar portion, the test takers are given a short dialogue before each question. The response in each conversation is not complete, and the student is to select the answer that completes the conversation from among four choices. The reading section is composed of 30 vocabulary and 20 reading comprehension questions. In the vocabulary section, students are given a sentence with a missing word in each problem and must choose one answer from the four options. Each item of reading comprehension problems also has a sentence, which is relatively longer than the one in the vocabulary section, and followed by a question concerning its meaning.

The testing time for the EPT is 65 minutes, and the time allotment for each section is 15 minutes for listening (including instruction), 50 minutes for grammar, vocabulary, and the reading section.

Clark (1978) states that "individual items within the grammar, vocabulary, and reading sections are of varied quality with respect to both language content and testing technique" (p. 186). Regarding the reading portion, he maintains that "although

relatively short, the reading texts cover a good variety of topical areas and written styles, ranging from personal correspondence to academic texts" (p. 186).

The internal consistency reliability is sufficient (the reliability reported ranged from r_{tt} = .89 to r_{tt} = .94) based on the estimates of Kuder-Richardson Formula 21 which were provided by the English Language Institute of the University of Michigan (1993). Also, the parallel forms reliability test provides confidence (correlations among Form A, B, and C ranged from r = .89 to r = .95). No validity data are available; however, the EPT seems to fit the purpose of the present study considering the test procedure and the appropriate content of the test as a placement test. Overall, as Clark (1978) describes, the EPT is considered to be "well conceived, easy to administer, and generally representative of the receptive competencies in English at issue in an undergraduate student setting" (p. 186).

2. The Writing Test was designed by a group of the ACLP teachers, and ACLP rotates 10 different topics every other year. The testing time is 40 minutes including time for prewriting, writing, and proof reading. The topic given to students is general enough to be administered to all six different levels (see a sample of the writing test question and an answer sheet in Appendix B and C).

3. The Oral Interview Test that is administered for the purpose of the entrance test takes the form of a one-to-one interview with a rater. The evaluator asks a student some initial information questions, and induces informal conversation. The

topic that is chosen is different depending on the students' level of proficiency. To induce speaking from a lower level student or a shy student, or to avoid elliptical answers, the evaluator sometimes uses a series of pictures asking the student to explain or describe them. No indices are provided to test the validity and reliability of both the Writing Test and the Oral Interview Test.

4. Teachers' rating of overall language proficiency is the averaged rating of global judgment on the students' readiness for the next level of instruction made by an individual teacher from each language skill class. At the end of every quarter, the five language teachers from the listening and pronunciation, grammar, reading, writing, and speaking class turn in the student's grade report, which reflects the next course level in which the student will enroll the following term. The five grade reports on a student are transferred to numeric scales and averaged to represent a student's overall grade. This grade will be named as 'teachers' rating of overall language proficiency' for convenience's sake in this study. This teachers' rating has a significant role in determining a student's next level of language instruction.

Scoring Procedures

Each quarter, new ACLP students are tested and placed individually in one of the six levels, from beginning to advanced. At the end of the quarter they take the exit test, a different version of the EPT, and the Writing Test with a different topic. The total score will place the students in the appropriate level of ACLP. This final scale to

determine a student's next level of language instruction is the sum score of the EPT, the Writing Test, and teachers' rating of overall language proficiency, which ranges from 0 to 226. The scoring scale and rubric for the tests are as follows:

1. the English Placement Test: The number of questions in each section corresponds to the raw score: listening- 20, grammar- 30, vocabulary & reading- 50.

2. the Writing Test: Scales from 1~ 6 are rescaled to 10 ~ 60 points. The ACLP instructors get together to standardize grading by reading several samples of the students' writing and debating on the grade with reference to the ACLP grading rubric until they reach consensus (see Writing Test Rubric in Appendix D). Two teachers read and rate each student's paper. Finally, the scores for each paper are called out by the teachers. If there are wide differences in scores, a third reader is required.

3. the Oral Interview Test: The rating ranges from 1 to 6, which measures the following six components: fluency, comprehension, amount of information, accuracy, effort to communicate, and pronunciation. The score of the oral test is given by calculating the average score of these six items which is then transferred to a 10 to 60 point grade (see the details on the Rating Scales for the Oral Interview Test attached in Appendix E).

4. Teachers' rating of overall language proficiency: The five language teachers' global judgment for each student's readiness for the next level of instruction

is transferred into a numerical score and averaged (see also the instruments section in this chapter). This scale of the overall language proficiency ratings range from 13 to 66 points.

Conditions and Methods of Analyses

The instruction given to the students who were enrolled in the ACLP program from Fall 1996, to Spring quarter 1997, includes courses in listening and pronunciation, grammar, reading, writing, and speaking/oral skills. Each course was offered to the students for 50 minutes on a daily basis. The EPT and the Writing Test were administered followed by intervals of ten-week instruction, and the Oral Interview Test was given to the initial students only. The combination of the EPT, the Writing Test, and either the Oral Interview Test or teachers' rating of overall language proficiency makes up the total grade of the ACLP placement test, which ranges from 0 to 226 and are entitled 'Test 1', 'Test 2', and 'Test 3' for this study.

All the raw scores (Test 1, Test 2, and Test 3) of 304 ACLP students at California State University, Los Angeles, were collected. Sixty-two cases out of those 304 which had more than three missing scores out of five sub-test scores were discarded because of missing data.

The following analytical methods were used: (a) t-tests, (b) simple regressions, (c) a correlation matrix, (d) a one-way ANOVA, followed by a Tukey's

HSD (Tukey's honestly significant difference) test, and (e) a stepwise multiple regression analysis. Those analytic methods were used for the following purposes:

1. The paired sample t-tests were conducted to examine if the gain scores of the tests after formal instruction were significant. The expectation was that students would significantly improve their language skills after each formal instruction course.

2. Simple regressions were employed to test the hypothesis that the grammar score is a major indicator for determining a student' next level of overall language proficiency. The teachers' rating of overall language proficiency in Test 2 (OVALL2) was entered as the dependent variable with the grammar score in Test 2 (GRA2) as the predictor variable. Another analysis was performed using the teachers' rating of overall language proficiency in Test 3 (OVALL3) as the dependent variable and the grammar score in Test 3 (GRA3) as the independent variable for the purpose of cross validation.

3. The correlation matrix among five variables (listening, grammar, reading, writing, and speaking) on Test 1 was obtained to examine the relationship between grammatical knowledge and the four language skills. One hundred and fifty six cases (the initial students who had participated in the Oral Interview) were used for the data analysis due to the availability of the test results on all four language skills. The expectation is that the grammar test will be most strongly related with the writing test. This expectation has been based on the "Monitor hypothesis" of Krashen and Terrell

(1983) that it is more plausible for learners to monitor their production using their grammatical knowledge in the writing test than any other test of language skill areas as long as time permits.

4. A one-way ANOVA was first conducted to examine if any statistically significant difference in means of the initial grammar competence levels exists among the initial overall language proficiency levels. A stepwise multiple regression was then performed to investigate to what extent the overall language proficiency level and the grammar competence level predict the gains of the total test score. The hypothesis was that the students at particular levels of overall language proficiency differ in the way they benefit from grammar instruction. This expectation is based on Celce-Murcia's claim (1991) that advanced learners of a second language benefit from grammar instruction more than beginning learners. This hypothesis will be tested by examining the relationship among overall language proficiency level, the grammar competence level, interaction between the overall language proficiency level and the grammar competence level in explaining the gains of the total test score.

Three new variables were created: LEVEL6, GRA1LEV6, and INTERAC6 based on the total scores and grammar scores. LEVEL6 refers to the students' initial overall language proficiency level (the levels ranged from one to six) while GRA1LEV6 defines the level of grammar competence measured by the grammar test of Test 1, and INTERAC6 as the interaction between the level of grammar

competence and the level of overall language proficiency. Level 1 to the beginning of Level 3 was labeled as beginning, the intermediate of Level 3 to the beginning of Level 5 as intermediate, and the intermediate of Level 5 to Level 6 as advanced. The dependent variable, TD2, which is the gain score from Test 1 to Test 3 was regressed upon these three predictor variables (LEVEL6, GRA1LEV6, and INTERAC6).

Table 1 presents the label and description of main variables for the ACLP placement test.

Table 1

Description of Variables

Variable	Label	Description
LIS1	Listening test 1	The 1st listening test
LIS2	Listening test 2	The 2nd listening test
LIS3	Listening test 3	The 3rd listening test
GRA1	Grammar Test 1	The 1st grammar test
GRA2	Grammar Test 2	The 2nd grammar test
GRA3	Grammar Test 3	The 3rd grammar test
READ1	Reading Test 1	The 1st reading test
READ2	Reading Test 2	The 2nd reading test
READ3	Reading Test 3	The 3rd reading test
WRIT1	Writing Test 1	The 1st writing test
WRIT2	Writing Test 2	The 2nd writing test
WRIT3	Writing Test 3	The 3rd writing test
ORAL1	Oral Test 1	The initial oral test
OVALL2	Overall Language Proficiency Rating 2	Teachers' ratings 2
OVALL3	Overall Language Proficiency Rating 3	Teachers' ratings 3
TOTAL1	Total score of Test 1	Sum of Lis1, Gra1, Read1, Writ1, & Oral1/ OVALL1
TOTAL2	Total score of Test 2	Sum of Lis2, Gra2, Read2, Writ2, & OVALL2
TOTAL3	Total score of Test 3	Sum of Lis3, Gra3, Read3, Writ3, & OVALL3

CHAPTER 4

Results

Chapter Four presents the results obtained from the statistical analyses. Results of the reliability test, a descriptive statistics table, and a summary of the paired sample t-test help to answer the first research question. Results of the simple regression analysis answers the second research question. Next, the correlation matrix provides an answer to the third research question. Finally, a summary of the one-way ANOVA and the stepwise regression analysis answers the fourth research question.

Reliability Tests

The reliability of the EPT is considered acceptable (alpha, $\alpha = .96$) in terms of equivalent-forms reliability based on the reliability test of Test 1, 2 and 3 by using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) analyses. Each portion of the tests also indicates high reliability ($\alpha = .81$ in the listening tests, $\alpha = .93$ in the grammar tests, $\alpha = .94$ in the reading tests, and $\alpha = .79$ in the Writing Tests). No reliability data was available for the Oral Interview Test due to the absence of the comparable data.

Research Question 1

Do students significantly improve their language skills after each formal instruction period?

Summary descriptive statistics for the test scores are presented in Table 2. The result indicates overall normal distributions for each test. The students made progress

every ten weeks of instruction in each test except after Listening Test 1. As is shown in Table 3, the paired sample t-tests indicate that these means differ significantly between Total1 (Test 1) and Total2 (Test 2) and also between Total2 (Test 2) and Total3 (Test 3). The observed significance level associated with the t-value of 15.373 on Test 1 and Test 2 is p = .000. Also, two means of Test 2 and Test 3 were unequal with the t-value of -14.132 at p = .000 significance level. Their results confirm the hypothesis that students significantly improve their language skills after formal instruction.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
LIS1*	20	11.33	3.51
LIS2*	20	10.38	3.19
LIS3**	20	13.40	3.56
GRA1*	30	17.23	6.42
GRA2*	30	19.04	6.41
GRA3**	30	20.88	5.49
READ1*	50	27.29	10.95
READ2*	50	29.10	10.55
READ3**	50	30.29	9.47
WRIT1*	60	23.20	10.34
WRIT2*	60	27.22	10.50
WRIT3**	60	28.23	10.57
ORAL1*	66	33.59	14.73
OVALL2*	66	44.04	13.55
OVALL3**	66	47.84	12.06
TOTAL1*	226	112.64	39.93
TOTAL2*	226	129.77	38.53
TOTAL3**	226	140.75	34.44

Note. * N = 242 for LIS1, GRA1, READ1, WRIT1, ORAL1, TOTAL1, LIS2, GRA2, READ2, WRIT2, OVALL2, and TOTAL2

** N = 103 for LIS3, GRA3, READ3, WRIT3, and OVALL3. This discrepancy is due to the students' leaving ACLP.

Table 3

Summary of Paired Sample T-tests

	Mean Difference	N	t-value	Sig. (2-tailed)
Total1		242		
Total2	D = 17.14	242	15.373	.000
Total2		103		
Total3	D = 18.68	103	14.132	.000

Research Question 2

To what extent, if any, can grammatical knowledge predict a student's next level of overall language proficiency?

The results from the simple regression analyses indicate a significant relationship between the grammar test score and teachers' rating of overall language proficiency. As is summarized in Table 4, the R^2s in Test 2 and Test 3 (R^2 = .571, p = .000 and R^2 = .582, p = .000 respectively) show that both GRA2 and GRA3 (the grammar test scores) account for a significant proportion of variance in the teachers' rating of overall language proficiency.

Table 4

Summary of Simple Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Teachers' Rating of Overall Language Proficiency

Dependent Variable	Independent Variable	R^2	B	β	t-value	Sig.
Overall ratings [a]	GRA2	.571	1.598	.756	17.866	.000
Overall ratings [b]	GRA3	.582	1.675	.763	11.869	.000

Note a. Teachers' rating of overall language proficiency on Test 2 (N = 242)

b. Teachers' rating of overall language proficiency on Test 3 (N = 103)

Research Question 3

To what extent, if any, is grammatical knowledge related to the four language skills (listening, reading, writing, and speaking)?

The correlation matrix in Table 5 indicates that a high intercorrelation exists among listening, grammar, reading, writing, and the speaking test scores. In terms of the grammar test in relation to the other language skill tests, it is inferred that grammar is the most strongly related to reading (r = .841 at p = .000), followed in order by listening (r = .699), writing (r = .678 at p = .000), and the oral test (r = .584 at p = .000).

Table 5

Correlation Matrix for Test 1 (n = 156)

Variable	1	2	3	4	5
1. GRA1	--				
2. LIS1	.699	--			
3. READ1	.841	.697	--		
4. WRIT1	.678	.612	.711	--	
5. ORAL1	.584	.659	.652	.664	--

Research Question 4

To what degree, if any, do learners at different levels of overall language proficiency differ in the way they benefit from grammar instruction?

As can be observed in Table 6, the one-way ANOVA for the level of grammar competence shows a significant difference in means ($p < .05$) among the levels of overall language proficiency except for the advanced level. The mean difference between Level 5 and Level 6 did not approach the significance level.

Examination of the stepwise regression reveals that LEVEL6 accounts for the largest amount of variance ($R = .377$, $p = .000$) of TD2 (the gain score of overall language proficiency) although the R square value is relatively low ($R^2 = .142$, $p = .000$). In addition, there seems to be a negative relationship between LEVEL6 and TD2 ($B = -4.744$), meaning that as the overall proficiency level increases, the gain of the overall test score decreases.

As is shown in Table 7, the other two variables (GRA1LEV6 and INTERAC6) did not enter the regression equation since their significance levels were beyond the level of default entry value. In other words, GRA1LEV6 (the grammar competence level) and INTERAC6 (the interaction between the grammar competence level and the overall language proficiency level) did not contribute significantly to the variance in the total gain score (the partial correlation values of .154 and .090 approached significance with p = .123 and .090 respectively).

Table 6

Analysis of Variance for the Grammar Competence Level and the Overall Language Proficiency Level

< One-way ANOVA >

Source	df	F Value	Sig
	Between Groups		
GRA1LEV6	5	73.851	.000
	Within Groups		
	236		

< Post Hoc Tests >

LEVEL6[a] (I)		LEVEL6 (J)	Mean Difference (I - J)	Std. Error	Sig.
1	×	2	-1.04	.180	.000
2	×	3	-.55	.165	.011
3	×	4	-.81	.154	.000
4	×	5	-.63	.172	.003
5	×	6	-.22	.272	.969

Note. Dependent Variable: GRA1LEV6 (grammar competence level)

a. Overall language proficiency level

Table 7

Summary of Stepwise Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Total Gain Score (n = 103)

< Variables in the Equation >					
Dependent Variable	Independent Variable	R^2	B	β	Sig
TD2[a]	LEVEL6[b]	.142	-4.744	-.377	.000

< Variables not in the Equation >					
Dependent Variable	Independent Variable	Beta In	Partial	t	Sig
TD2[a]	GRA1LEV6[c]	.241	.154	1.555	.123
	INTERAC6[d]	.274	.090	.902	.369

Note. a. TD2 : Total3 minus Total1

b. Overall language proficiency level

c. Grammar competence level as measured by GRA1

d. Interaction between overall language proficiency level and grammar competence level (LEVEL6 × GRA1LEV6)

CHAPTER 5

Discussion

This study attempted to explore the relationships of grammatical knowledge among overall language proficiency ratings, the four language skill areas, and improvement on the overall test score. The results for Research Question 1 and 2 confirmed the initial expectations whereas the results for Question 3 did not support the hypothesis that grammatical knowledge would be most related to writing proficiency. The results for Question 4 only partially supported the hypothesis that the students at a certain level of overall language proficiency would differ in the way they benefit from grammar instruction. The overall findings indicate that grammatical knowledge is a significant component in language acquisition and learning.

Research Question 1 asked if students significantly improve their language skills after each formal instruction period. The results support several prior research studies (e.g., Krashen, 1981; Krashen et al., 1978; Krashen & Seliger, 1976; Long, 1988), which indicate the positive effect of formal instruction. As Krashen (1981) maintains, the amount of formal instruction is a better predictor of language proficiency than the mere incidental "exposure-type informal environments" (p. 49) in second language acquisition.

Research Question 2 asked to what extent grammatical knowledge can predict a student's next level of overall language proficiency. The average of the teachers'

rating has been considered to be one of the indicators in determining the students' next level of instruction. The results of the regression analyses indicate that grammatical knowledge is a significant predictor of the students' overall language proficiency rating. This result verifies a positive view of grammar instruction supported by many researchers (i.e., Doughty, 1991; Krashen et al, 1978; Long, 1983; 1988; Schneider, 1993; Terrell, 1991).

However, it may be a mistake to assume that grammar instruction itself is a significant predictor of overall language proficiency considering the fact that the students at ACLP have been provided with other learning opportunities, such as other regular courses and informal settings, which might have influenced the increase of learners' rule-consciousness. However, without form-focused instruction, it appears to be difficult to increase learners' rule-consciousness merely by reading, listening, writing, and speaking classes although the learners can pick up some grammatical features from those classes and integrate them as part of their grammar competence.

Research Question 3 asked to what extent, if any, grammatical knowledge is related to the four language skills. The overall findings from the correlation matrix indicate that grammar has a strong relationship to all language skill areas. In addition to that, even though the differences of the correlation-coefficient values among these sub-tests may not be significant, it is noticeable that grammar is more strongly related to reading, compared to the other language skills. The present result conflicts with the

initial expectations of this study that writing proficiency would be best related to the grammar test. Again, this result is also different from Celce-Murcia's (1985; as cited in Stern, 1992) notion that "the receptive skills require less grammatical knowledge than the productive ones, and between the two productive skills, writing is more grammatically demanding than speaking" (p. 134).

However, the findings for Question 3 are, in some ways, consistent with those of Alderson (1993), who reported the relationship between grammar and reading in a test battery, as measured by the International English Language Testing System (IELTS). As Alderson points out, it may be not surprising to obtain a high correlation between grammar and reading considering the characteristics of the grammar tests which are given in written form, with the test takers expected to respond to the test items by reading. Given the high correlation coefficient between grammar and reading, it can be concluded that grammar instruction may help in increasing learners' reading proficiency or vice versa. If the findings of Paribakht and Wesche's (1992) research are valid, learners would not benefit from reading itself to improve their grammar competence, as much as they would learn from grammar instruction.

It is interesting that the listening test came out to be the second most strongly related to the grammar test in the present study. This result might be incidental considering that only one research study is available for cross validation. Only Alderson (1993) has provided direct evidence of the high correlation coefficient

between a grammar test and a listening test. Surprisingly, a coefficient between these two variables was even higher than the correlation between grammar and reading in his study. However, Alderson did not explain about this any further than just presenting the index of the correlation coefficient. If his findings are valid, it may be also inferred that grammar is an important component in listening in a foreign language study. Overall, it will be reasonable to conclude that grammar is a significant component of the four language skills based on the result showing a high correlation of grammatical knowledge to all four language skills.

Research Question 4 asked to what degree, if any, learners at different levels of overall language proficiency differ in the way they benefit from grammar instruction. Based on the results, there are several possible explanations regarding formal instruction and grammar instruction.

First, the results from the one-way ANOVA suggest that the students' grammar competence level was differentiated by the overall language proficiency level, but no significant mean difference was shown among the advanced students. This means that even though grammar instruction plays a significant role in second language learning, an advanced level of grammatical knowledge does not seem to be a significant predictor in explaining the advanced level of overall language proficiency. This is supported by the stepwise regression analysis, which indicates that the level of grammar competence is not a significant predictor of the gain in the overall test score.

To sum up these two analyses, it can be predicted that once a student has reached a certain level of overall language proficiency, the contribution of grammar competence to the overall language proficiency level and additional overall improvement are no longer significant. This contradicts the initial expectation that the students at a particular level of overall language proficiency would differ in the way they benefit from grammar instruction.

Second, it is expected that second language learners at the beginning level of proficiency are more likely to gain on the overall test score than the intermediate or advanced learners. This makes sense considering the fact that in this study the subjects were young adults (or adults) who had passed a critical period of their learning stage, and at a certain level of proficiency a plateau is reached beyond which learners' language proficiency will improve only very slightly (Richard-Amato, 1996). This result supports the findings of Weslander and Stephany (1983) regarding the effect of ESL instruction being stronger at the lower levels than the upper levels of overall language proficiency.

These findings seem to confirm many theorists' claim that grammar instruction alone may not be an effective way of teaching a second language (e.g., Celce-Murcia, 1991; Ellis, 1995; Meyer, Youga, & Flint-Ferguson, 1990/1995; Sedgwick, 1990/1995).

With regard to the failure of establishing a significant interaction effect between the overall language proficiency level and the grammar competence level in explaining the gain of the total test score, another interpretation would be that grammatical knowledge may have been embedded in the learners' implicit knowledge, which makes it difficult to detect the interaction effect between the overall language proficiency level and the grammar competence level.

CHAPTER 6

Conclusions

Chapter Six summarizes the discussion presented in Chapter Five, followed by recommendations for further research and implications for instruction in an ESL/EFL program.

Summary of Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine the role of grammar instruction in an ESL program by reviewing the pertinent studies and performing quantitative research. It seems that most recent researchers (e.g., DeKeyser, 1998; Doughty, 1991; Harley, 1998; Long, 1983; 1988; Long & Robinson, 1998; Schneider, 1993; Terrell, 1991) view grammatical knowledge as a significant component in second language acquisition, and a certain degree of grammar instruction is necessary to develop learners' language proficiency. However, no current research or theory seems to advocate a return to the traditional grammar teaching methods or a focus on grammatical features for grammar's sake alone (Lightbown, 1998).

The results of the present study are congruent with the above. It is apparent that grammar instruction in an ESL program plays a significant role in facilitating the second language learners' consciousness of linguistic accuracy. Furthermore, grammatical knowledge can be a significant component to determine the learners' next proficiency level for instruction.

In addition, this study showed that grammatical knowledge is strongly related to the four language skills. Especially, it is noticeable that there is the strongest relationship between grammar and reading proficiency. This means that grammar instruction may help in developing reading proficiency or vice versa. Another area of interest is the high correlation between the grammar test and the listening test, but the evidence is marginal due to the lack of empirical studies for the cross validation. Further studies are required to investigate this relationship in detail.

Furthermore, this study attempted to explore the relationships among the students' grammar competence level, the overall language proficiency level, and gains of the overall test score. It seems that the students at different levels of overall language proficiency demonstrate different levels of grammatical knowledge to a certain degree, but that does not necessarily lead to a conclusion that the grammar competence level contributes to the incremental gain in overall language proficiency. Furthermore, the findings are insufficient to answer the question of which level of learners benefit most from grammar instruction.

Implications for Further Research and Instruction

The research findings of this study do not fully address the role of grammar instruction because they depend on quantitative data and statistical analyses for a limited number of cases. Larger studies accompanied by descriptive research can compensate for the limitations of this study.

There is ample evidence that acknowledges the significance of grammatical knowledge and the role of grammar instruction in second language learning. However, as some researchers have maintained (e.g., Long & Robinson, 1998; Richards, 1985), the findings do not imply that ESL/EFL practitioners should adopt a grammar syllabus or structural syllabus. The results from Research Question 4 have confirmed the above. The implication for researchers and program developers in the field of ESL/EFL is that it is time to move one step further to integrate grammar instruction into the ESL program. Innovative practitioners' cooperative work might be needed to provide second language learners with more appropriate learning environments. "Language instruction in an integrated unit" rather than in isolated grammar teaching, and "the indirect methods" have already been suggested by Celce-Murcia (1991), Meyer, Youga, & Flint-Ferguson (1990/1995), and Sedwick (1995).

As argued by Green and Hecht's 1992 study, who reviewed learners' ability in different categories of grammatical features, degree of explicitness and "how best to teach grammar" (Ellis, 1998) may be another issue that should be further studied to improve learners' language proficiency at all levels of ESL/EFL curricula.

In addition, as the findings indicate, the learners' initial language proficiency level seems not to be a significant variable in explaining the role of grammar to significantly improve overall language proficiency. Other possible predictors may

include age, educational background, or the schemata of an individual learner, all of which need more empirical research.

Finally, it is hoped that this study can aid ESL/EFL researchers and practitioners in determining the role of grammar instruction in the language classroom. More importantly, it is hoped that the results of this study will make language instructors aware of the theoretical underpinnings underlining the role of grammar instruction in the language classroom.

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APPENDIX A

SAMPLE QUESTIONS FROM THE EPT

PAGE 1--Form B

ENGLISH PLACEMENT TEST

This examination is designed to measure your mastery of the English language. There are four different kinds of problems: listening comprehension, grammar, vocabulary, and reading comprehension. There are 100 problems: 20 listening, 30 grammar, 30 vocabulary, and 20 reading. The questions and answer choices are in this test booklet, but you should mark your answers on the separate answer sheet. Write your name, today's date, and Form B on the answer sheet. Do not make any marks in this test booklet.

Now, you will begin with the listening comprehension problems.

Listening Comprehension

This is a test of how well you understand spoken English. The examiner will either ask a question or make a statement. To show that you have understood what was said, you should choose the ONE answer choice that is correct.

Here is an example of the question type of problem. Listen carefully to the question, then choose the ONE answer choice that is a reasonable response or answer.

Example I. a. I am.
b. Tomorrow.
c. To Detroit.

The correct response is choice b, "Tomorrow." Choice b has been marked on your answer sheet to show that it is the correct answer to Example I.

Now here is an example of the statement type of problem. Listen to the statement and then choose the ONE phrase or sentence that corresponds to it.

Example II. a. Only John went.
b. Only Mary went.
c. They both went.

"John and Mary went to the store," means that they both went. On your answer sheet, for Example II, mark the space after choice c to show that "They both went," is the correct answer.

Do not make any marks in this test booklet. Mark all your answers on the separate answer sheet. If you do not know how to do this test, raise your hand and the instructor will explain it to you.

Please be quiet and listen carefully. None of the questions or statements can be repeated. Now, turn the page to problem number one.

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Grammar, Vocabulary, and Reading Comprehension

This part of the test has three different kinds of problems. Numbers 21 through 50 are grammar, numbers 51 through 80 are vocabulary, and numbers 81 through 100 are reading comprehension.

In each grammar problem there is a short conversation between two people. The conversation is not complete. You should look at the answer choices which follow the conversation, and then choose the ONE answer that correctly completes the conversation.

Example III. "What's your name?"
"____ name is John."
a. I
b. Me
c. My
d. Mine

The correct answer is choice c, "My." On your answer sheet, for Example III, mark choice c. Answer all the grammar problems this way.

In each vocabulary problem there is a sentence with a word missing. From the answer choices following the sentence, you should choose the ONE word that best fits into the sentence and makes it meaningful.

Example IV. I can't ____ you his name, because I don't know it.
a. talk
b. say
c. speak
d. tell

The correct answer is choice d, "tell." On your answer sheet, for Example IV, mark choice d. Answer all the vocabulary problems this way.

In each reading comprehension problem you will read a sentence and then answer a question about it. Choose the ONE best answer to the question, using the information in the sentence you have just read.

Example V. John drove me to Eleanor's house.
Who drove?
a. I did.
b. John did.
c. John and I did.
d. Eleanor did.

The correct answer is b, "John did." On your answer sheet, mark choice b for Example V. Answer all the reading problems this way.

You will have 50 minutes to finish the rest of the test. Work as quickly as possible, and answer all the problems. If you are not sure of the correct answer, make a guess. Unanswered problems will be counted wrong. Now, go on to problem 21 and do not stop until you have finished problem 100.

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APPENDIX B

SAMPLE QUESTION FROM THE WRITING TEST

CE/ACLP **SPRING 1997**

WRITING TEST

Teachers: Please write the following test topic on the board as well as read it out loud to the students.

TOPIC: Write about a special teacher that you had before coming to ACLP. Why do you remember him/her? What would you like to say to him/her now?

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APPENDIX C

WRITING TEST ANSWER SHEET

California State University/Los Angeles
American Culture and Language Program

1st	2nd	

Final Progress Test in Writing

CODE NUMBER
332

PLEASE FOLLOW THESE DIRECTIONS:

1. Do not write your name or level number on this paper.
2. Write your essay on every line. Do not skip lines. Use the back of this sheet if needed.
3. Write in blue or black ink or dark pencil.
4. Answer the question which your teacher has written on the blackboard by writing a short English composition or essay. Write as well as you can, showing your ability to write English paragraphs and sentences in a well-organized and grammatically correct way.

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APPENDIX D

WRITING TEST RUBRIC

WRITING TEST RUBRIC, 6 POINT SCALE

*A 6 paper is a top paper that will clearly show the ability to structure an essay and to present a discussion, marshalling appropriate evidence to support its point of view. On the whole, it will also show good control over sentence structure and grammar, though it may have an occasional error. It does not have to be perfect, imaginative, or creative; however, imagination and creativity may be present.

*A 5 paper will do many of the things a 6 paper will do, but it will do them less well. Basically, it will be a less polished version of a 6 paper.

*A 4 paper will show the ability to break a topic down into parts, but may show difficulty with transitions or the movement between levels of general and specific. It will adhere to most conventions of English essay style, but may have short or undeveloped paragraphs. It will stand above a 3 paper by its organization and stronger control over language.

*A 3 paper is a lower half paper that will treat the question in a less sophisticated way than an upper half paper and/or show lower ability in the construction of sentences or in grammatical control. It will be on topic, but may offer minimal specific details to support general assertions. This score should also be assigned to any paper which has frequent and serious mistakes in grammar that make it very difficult to follow the argument despite the presence of a good organizational framework.

*A 2 paper will be clearly handicapped in either the ability to present a clear discussion and stay on the topic and/or in sentence structure and syntax. It may be lengthy but without substance. Papers in this range may fail to show much attention to paragraph indentation and other conventions or may lack the ability to go beyond the superficial.

*A 1 paper will show weak or absent ability to structure an essay both on the organizational and sentence level. It will show poor ability at constructing sentences and/or addressing the question at hand. It may fail to observe the most basic conventions of English writing, such as capitalization. Any paper of less than 5 sentences should automatically be assigned this grade.

*A 0 paper will have nothing written on it, or the writing topic will be copied, or a brief comment such as "no inglish" will be written.

Special Notes:

OFF-TOPIC PAPERS: Write OT on your scoring sheet next to score.

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APPENDIX E

RATING SCALES FOR THE ACLP ORAL INTERVIEW TEST

CSULA/CE/AMERICAN CULTURE AND LANGUAGE PROGRAM

RATING SCALES FOR THE ACLP ORAL INTERVIEW **Rev. 9/96**

Adapted from Testing Oral Communication in the Foreign Language Classroom, Walter H. Bartz, Language in Education: Theory and Practice, 17, Center for Applied Linguistics, 1979.

A. FLUENCY: This refers to the overall smoothness, continuity and naturalness of the student's speech, as opposed to pauses for rephrasing sentences, groping for words, etc.

1. Many unnatural pauses, very halting and fragmentary delivery. Gives one word answers to questions.

2. Quite a few unnatural pauses, frequently halting and fragmentary delivery. Answers questions with few words.

3. Some unnatural pauses, frequently halting and fragmentary delivery. Answers questions with short phrases.

4. A few unnatural pauses, somewhat smooth and effortless delivery. Answers questions with complete sentences.

5. Hardly any unnatural pauses, fairly smooth and effortless delivery. Answers questions with complete sentences or phrases, as appropriate.

6. No unnatural pauses, almost effortless and smooth, but still perceptibly non-native. Answers questions with complete sentences or phrases, as appropriate.

B. COMPREHENSION: This refers to the ability of the student to understand a normal rate of conversation, and to convey this understanding in an appropriate response.

1. No comprehension; student does not understand the interviewer. Shakes head, laughs, apologizes, echoes the interviewer, or says "yes" to everything.

2. Student comprehends basic questions, and is somewhat able to answer. Interviewer has to slow down considerably in his speech, re-phrase questions, and negotiate for meaning.

3. Student comprehends more complex questions, and responds in a limited way. Interviewer has to slow down a bit in his speech.

4. Student comprehends most of what interviewer says, and is able to respond appropriately, if not accurately.

5. Student comprehends almost all of what interviewer says.

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6. Student comprehends all of what interviewer says, and responds appropriately.

C. AMOUNT OF COMMUNICATION: This refers to the quantity of information relevant to the communication situation which the student is able to convey.

1. No relevant information is conveyed by the student.

2. Very little revevant information is conveyed.

3. A fair amount of relevant information is conveyed.

4. Most relevant information is conveyed.

5. Almost all relevant information is conveyed, and some extra information is added.

6. All relevant information is conveyed, and extra information is added.

D. ACCURACY: This refers to the grammatical correctness of the student's utterances.

1. No utterances are rendered correctly.

2. Few utterances are rendered correctly.

3. Some utterances are rendered correctly, but many structural problems remain.

4. Many utterances are rendered correctly, but some problems remain with structure.

5. Almost all utterances are rendered correctly, but a few problems remain with structure.

6. Most utterances are rendered correctly, only minor problems remain with structure.

E. EFFORT/ABILITY TO COMMUNICATE: This refers to the student's willingness/ability to express him/herself and to get a message across How hard does the student try?

1. Student makes no effort to communicate; student is unable to communicate.

2. Student makes little effort to communicate; student has very limited ability to communicate.

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3. Student makes some effort to communicate; student has limited ability to communicate, but answers questions and gets ideas across.

4. Student makes effort to communicate, and tries to complete the task; student has ability to communicate, and generates own sentences.

5. Student makes an effort to communicate, and tries hard to complete the task and (perhaps) goes beyond the task to add additional information; student communicates well, and generates own sentences.

6. Student is eager to communicate, and makes a concerted effort to complete the task, and uses all possible resources to express himself/herself; student has excellent ability to express him/herself.

F. PRONUNCIATION: This refers to the student's accuracy and comprehensibility of pronunciation.

1. Pronunciation is inaccurate and almost incomprehensible.

2. Pronunciation has a distinct first language interference which interferes with communication.

3. Pronunciation still has an interference from first language, but it does not interfere with communication.

4. Pronunciation may have some specific phonemes which deviate from standard American pronunciation. Intonation and rhythm may also interfere with easy comprehensibility.

5. Pronunciation has some individualized vowel or consonant anomalies. On the whole, good articulation.

6. Pronunciation is near native, though there may still be individualized anomalies.

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